

VZCZCXYZ0008  
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHRB #0333/01 1091221  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
P 191221Z APR 09  
FM AMEMBASSY RABAT  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9999  
INFO RUEHAS/AMEMBASSY ALGIERS 4973  
RUEHTU/AMEMBASSY TUNIS 9783

UNCLAS RABAT 000333

SIPDIS  
SENSITIVE

STATE FOR NEA/PI, NEA/MAG, DRL/NESCA AND NEA/PPD  
TUNIS FOR MEPI REGIONAL OFFICE

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [EAID](#) [KPAO](#) [KPMI](#) [MO](#)  
SUBJECT: NEA DAS SPIRNAK VISIT ENCOURAGES MEPI AND PAS  
CONTACTS IN MOROCCO

REF: STATE 036567

¶1. (U) Summary: The Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) has been a high impact, flexible tool in promoting democracy and other USG goals in Morocco. Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary (A/DAS) for Near East Affairs (NEA) Madelyn Spirnak visited MEPI projects and implementers and participated in public diplomacy projects April 1-3. Public affairs events received positive media attention, focusing on strong relations between USG and Morocco and support for Moroccan youth. The MEPI funded Women's Election Program implemented by the International Republican Institute (IRI) and National Democratic Institute (NDI) has already trained more than 2,000 women in only three weeks in how to effectively run as candidates in the upcoming June local elections. MEPI alumni and implementers shared repeated testimonies of the success of MEPI-funded programs in Morocco and encouraged Washington to continue funding the MEPI Student Leaders Exchange Program. Post appreciates speedy NEA/PI action on two recent time sensitive project requests and seeks MEPI assistance for a prison reform and monitoring program in Morocco. End Summary.

-----  
A/DAS Spirnak Visits Morocco  
-----

¶2. (U) NEA A/DAS Madelyn Spirnak traveled to Rabat, Morocco, April 1-3 for the primary purpose of attending a preparatory meeting for the 2009 Forum for the Future (Reftel). In addition, Spirnak also met with the Charge d'Affaires (CDA) and other members of the mission's Democracy Working Group to learn how the Mission is engaging civil society through various NEA/PI- and NEA/PPD-funded programs.

-----  
MEPI Partnership with ABA  
-----

¶3. (SBU) During her visit, A/DAS Spirnak met with Morocco National Judicial Training Institute Director General Mohammed Bennani who demonstrated the 15 MEPI funded e-learning modules focused on the family code and labor laws. MEPI partnered with the American Bar Association (ABA) Rule of Law Initiative to implement this program with an initial group of 100 family court clerks. According to Bennani, 70 percent of the students were very impressed with the content of the e-learning modules and use the Internet on a regular basis. 100 percent of the students had a positive opinion toward incorporating new technologies into the legal curriculum. The Institute will implement the program throughout the country for the benefit of all judges and family law clerks as soon as it finalizes contract agreements with an internet service provider to host the training

modules. Bennani shared this successful MEPI-funded program last month with judicial colleagues in Libya and said there was interest throughout the region in implementing a similar concept.

-----  
IRI/NDI Women's Election Program Launches Successfully  
-----

¶4. (SBU) IRI Country Director Jamie Tronnes and then-NDI Country Director Felix Ulloa briefed A/DAS Spirnak on the recent progress of the MEPI-funded Women's Election Program co-implemented by two party institutes. Formally launched on March 21, the program aims to train women candidates who will contest the approximately 12,000 new seats reserved for women on local councils in June municipal elections. The program will help women candidates enhance their public diplomacy, messaging and voter outreach skills and is proving to be a huge draw. More than 2,000 women have already received training in the initial three weeks and the project is on its way toward bringing in a large number of women candidates into the campaign process. The MEPI-funded program is the only country-wide effort targeting women and preparing them for the upcoming local elections.

-----  
Spirnak Participates in PAS Events  
-----

¶5. (U) In conjunction with the mission's Public Affairs Section (PAS), A/DAS Spirnak presented 30 sets of My Arabic Library books, along with Nouveaux Horizons, Arabic book translation program titles, and IIP publications, to the

Moroccan Ministry of Youth and Sports for distribution to youth centers throughout Morocco. This PAS outreach effort builds on a MEPI-initiated project launched several years ago to promote Arabic-language education in Moroccan primary schools. The book presentation event was widely covered by local media. Spirnak also participated in a PAS Citizen Journalism grant project with Moroccans aged 10-16. In the "interviewing" session, the children took turns interviewing the A/DAS, and later practiced how to incorporate internet technology to disseminate information. This pilot grant is engaging five community centers and libraries in the Rabat area to offer basic journalism, blogging, and internet skills training during school breaks, a program the Mission aims to replicate both at the pilot centers and elsewhere in Morocco.

¶6. (U) Spirnak also participated in a PAS dinner that brought together American and Moroccan academics and exchange program alumni. The goal was to exchange ideas and create new linkages that will build upon existing public affairs programs. Visiting Americans included Roger Allen, Chair of the Department of Near Eastern Studies at the University of Pennsylvania. Paul Heck, Professor of Islamic Studies in Georgetown University's Theology Department, who is teaching comparative religion as a Fulbright Senior Scholar at Mohammad V University in Rabat, provided fascinating insights on his students and his efforts to stress an analytical approach to religious studies. Doug Davis, professor at Haverford College, discussed his personal interest and research on the influence of Arabic hip-hop music and the messages it spreads (government corruption, status quo, lack of opportunities) to youth throughout the region. A/DAS Spirnak opined MEPI would want to learn more about this movement and how hip-hop might be used in future PD or MEPI programs targeting youth.

-----  
Meeting MEPI Alumni  
-----

¶7. (U) During mission representational events, A/DAS Spirnak had the opportunity to interact with Moroccan officials, Members of Parliament and many other MEPI local grant implementers and alumni, including representatives from MEPI-funded Women in Technology, the Association of Women

Entrepreneurs in Morocco, MEPI Student Alumni, Tanmia, Project ALEF, The People's Mirror, and the MEPI Alumni-sponsored Caravan For Young Leaders program. During each of these events, A/DAS Spirnak heard repeated testimonies on the success of MEPI-funded programs in Morocco as well as requests to continue the MEPI-funded Student Leaders Exchange Program and support for the Alumni Network. Participants at a lunch also discussed the importance of MEPI's communication strategy and how the Alumni Network might assist in outreach.

-----  
Post Requests MEPI Assistance With Prison Project  
-----

18. (SBU) In a final outbrief with the CDA, USAID Deputy Director Ramona El Hamzaoui presented a USD 5 million proposal focused on addressing the needs of at-risk youth and youth in prison to mitigate disaffection and extremism in Morocco. The Mission is in the process of finalizing this inter-agency program for consideration for 1207 funding for training at-risk youth and reforming the justice system to include alternative sentencing in order to keep youth out of prison. Once the 1207 proposal is finalized and submitted, the Mission plans to request MEPI funding for the portions of the project related to MEPI reform goals.

19. (U) Comment: MEPI is a strong, flexible tool that has directly advanced mission strategic goals with democratic, economic, and judicial reforms, as well as indirectly by enhancing civil society's voice and offering cultural exchanges. We are extremely grateful to MEPI Washington for accepting and funding two recent project requests in record time: the NDI/IRI co-implemented Women's Election Program and the focus group research project to be implemented by The People's Mirror. We hope that we can continue to count on the same level of cooperation in the future.

110. (U) This cable has been cleared by NEA A/DAS Spirnak.  
End comment.

\*\*\*\*\*

Visit Embassy Rabat's Classified Website;  
<http://www.intelink.sgov.gov/wiki/Portal:Moro> cco  
\*\*\*\*\*

Jackson